

DOECAST

From: DOECAST
Sent: Tuesday, September 26, 1995 5:16 PM
Subject: Announcement: Operating in Absence of Approved Appropriations
Attachments: q&a.txt

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT

FROM: ARCHER L. DURHAM
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT: OPERATING IN THE ABSENCE OF APPROVED 1996
APPROPRIATIONS

By now, you probably have heard or read about the possibility of a Governmentwide shutdown and employee furloughs beginning October 1, 1995, if fiscal year (FY) 1996 appropriations bills or a continuing resolution are not passed by Congress and signed by the President. This has been of great concern to us all, and therefore, I want to bring you up-to-date on the situation.

The Department's Chief Financial Officer, working with the General Counsel and staff from the Office of Human Resources and Administration have been working to develop the Department's contingency operations plan. As a consequence of that work, it has been determined that the Department's multi-year appropriations will allow it to operate on prior year money beginning October 1, 1995, in the event that the Department's regular appropriations or a continuing resolution are not enacted by September 30, 1995. A review of the available prior year balances and estimated expenses shows that all programs could remain in operation well into October before it became necessary to initiate any "shutdown" and associated furlough activities. In fact, many programs could remain in operation through November 1995, although it will be necessary to conduct operations in a prudent manner to conserve the prior year balances.

In the unlikely event that prior year balances are exhausted in any program area, the organization(s) responsible for that program may conduct only those program activities authorized by law, or so-called emergency activities involving the safety of human life or the protection of property where the threat can be said to be near at hand and demanding of immediate response. Currently, Heads of Departmental Elements are working to identify emergency activities and personnel who would continue to work in the unlikely event of an appropriations lapse as well as employees who would work for part of the lapse period to ensure an orderly shutdown. Once these designations have been finalized, Heads of Departmental Elements will notify employees as to their status should their program activities be without funding. Employees not engaged in emergency activities would be excused from their jobs and placed in a temporary nonduty, nonpay furlough status because of lack of funds during such a hiatus.

Again, let me emphasize that we do not think it will be necessary to

furlough employees of the Department because of a general shutdown or lapse in appropriations in the beginning of FY-96. However, I know that many of you are concerned about this situation, and with that in mind, I have attached to this notice answers to many commonly asked questions about employee rights and entitlements associated with furlough status.

We will keep you informed of any new developments regarding the likelihood of furlough. If you have specific questions not covered in the attached questions and answers, I urge you to contact your supervisor, your servicing personnel office representative, or, as appropriate, your union representative.

Attachment

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 Qs&As.WPD
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Ao.Â  4 4 4 AA Âwhat is a Â  ÂshutdownÂ  Â or Â xÂemergencyÂ  Â furlough?Â Â

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2. Are any of the employees taking other jobs while on furlough?

3. ÄÄÄÄÄ
ÄÄÄÄÄ 4n4e4tÄÄÄÄÄ May an employee volunteer to do his or her job on a nonpay basis
while
furloughed? Ä Ä

4. Airgra
 ÁQ.Á 4n4e4tÁÁaÁWhat effect will being furloughed have on creditable service for retirement purposes? ÁÁÁ

5.Ávrdra

ÁQ.Á 4 4o4sÁÄuÄDoes retirement coverage continue while in furlough status?ÄyÄ

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ÁA.Á 4X4J4YÄYes, coverage continues at no cost to employees. When employees are furloughed (i.e., put in a nonpay status) for only a portion of a pay period, their contributions are adjusted in proportion to their basic pay.

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6.ÄrrÖr

ÁQ.Á 4t4i4 ÄÄnÄWhat effect will a furlough have on an employeeÄ tÄs Ä ÄhighÄthreeÄÄ Ä years for retirement? ÄpÄ

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ÁA.Á 4X4J4YÄAn employeeÄe Äs average highest three years of pay for computing an annuity is not affected if the furlough is six months or less. This is true whether you are covered by

the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal EmployeesÄf Ä Retirement System.

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ÁQ.Á 4 4e4vÄÄeÄAre the retirement rules concerning the effect of a furlough the same for employees under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal EmployeesÄÄÄ Retirement System?ÄÄÄ

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ÁA.Á 4i4n4 ÄYes

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ÁQ.Á 4Ä4Ä4ÄÄÄÄIf I am furloughed, will my health benefits continue?ÄoÄ

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ÁA.Á 4a4 4iÄYes. Your health benefits enrollment will continue for up to 365 consecutive days in a nonpay status. The GovernmentÄbeÄs contribution will be paid for the furlough period.

However, employee premiums will accumulate and be withheld from the employeeÄugÄs pay upon returning to duty.

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ÁQ.Á 4Ä4Ä4ÄÄÄÄIf I am furloughed, will my life insurance be canceled?ÄÄÄ

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ÁA.Á 4e4p4oÄNo. Your coverage continues for 12 consecutive months in a nonpay status without cost to the employee or the agency.

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ÁQ.Á 4e4p4oÄÄÄÄWhat happens if employees cancel their health benefits and life insurance to save money?ÄrÄ

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ÁA.Á 4e4p4oÄEmployees are strongly encouraged Ä ÄnotÄ Ä to cancel either their health benefits or life insurance coverage. If health benefits are canceled, the employee must generally wait for the next open season to reÄenroll. If life insurance is canceled, the employee must wait at least one year from the date of cancellation, have a examination (at the employeeÄÄÄÄs expense), and be approved before reÄenrolling. Additionally, cancellation

of either coverage may affect the employee's right to carry such coverage into retirement.

11. Artr

AQ. 4 4o4eAg May employees take leave on furlough days and thus get paid for time away from work? A A

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AA. 4 4o4eNo. Furlough days are nonworkdays. Annual, sick, court leave and leave for bone marrow or organ donation leave cannot be granted on a nonworkday. However, military leave must be charged on a nonworkday when the nonworkday occurs wholly within the period of military leave for military duty. Employees who serve as witnesses or jurors on furlough days will retain all monies received from the court.

12. Arwry

AQ. 4 4r4jAo If employees are injured while on furlough, are they eligible for workers' compensation? A A

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AA. 4 4r4jNo. Workers' compensation is paid to employees only if they are injured while performing their duties. 13. Artr

AQ. 4 4a4eAu Are employees entitled to unemployment compensation while on furlough? A A A

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AA. 4 4r4j Employees may be eligible for unemployment compensation. Employees should keep in mind that, for a short furlough, they might return to work before receiving their first payment. Also, if employees are paid unemployment benefits and Congress acts to pay employees for the furlough period, employees may be required to pay back the unemployment monies they received. Unemployment eligibility and compensation vary from state to state; therefore, employees should submit their questions to the appropriate State office.

14. Arwry

AQ. 4 4a4eAu Can I get a loan from my Thrift Saving Plan to help cover my financial obligations during furlough? A A

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AA. 4 4a4eNo. Loan payments can be made only through payroll deductions. Consequently, you cannot receive a loan until you return to work.

15. Anrir

AQ. 4 4i4 An Can I withdraw my Thrift Saving Plan account while I am furloughed? Ae A

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AA. 4 4t4tNo. Accounts can be withdrawn only after participants are separated from the Federal service.

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AQ. 4 4o4eAo Do I have to continue making payments on my Thrift Saving Plan loan while I am furloughed? Ao A

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AA.Â 414a4eÂNo. Loan payments can only be made through payroll deductions, therefore you cannot make payments while you are furloughed. If you miss payments for less than 90 days, your loan payment schedule will be extended.